DEVELOPING INSTRUCTION
PLAQUES FOR THE BLIND
TEACHER
Louis J. Haas

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND REHABILITATION

DEVELOPING INSTRUCTION PLAQUES FOR THE BLIND TEACHER

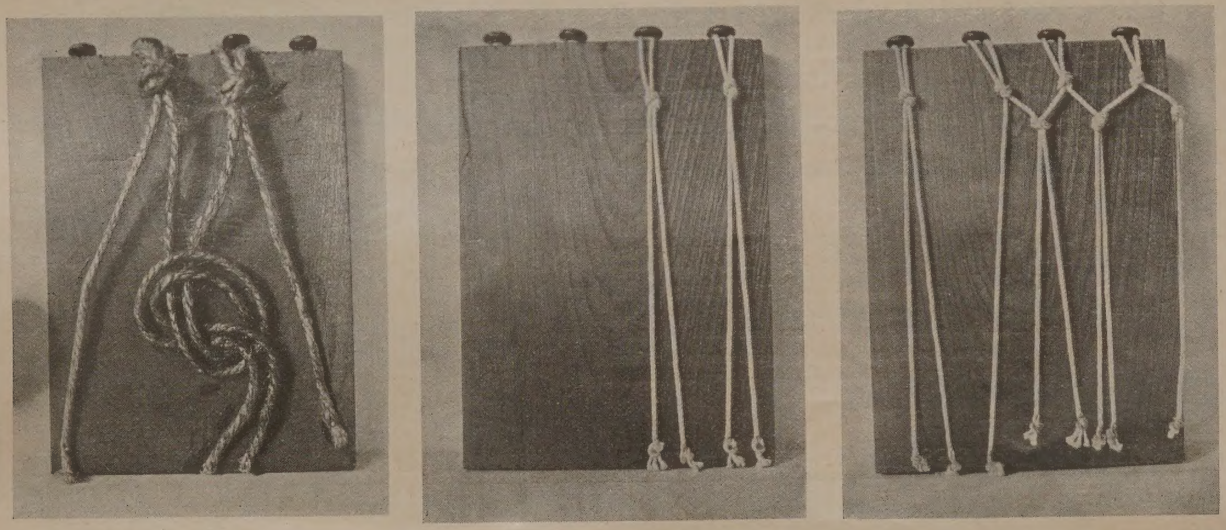
By Louis J. Haas, Director of Men's Therapeutic Occupations, Bloomingdale Hospital, White Plains, N. Y.

THE therapeutic value to the patient of feeling that in spite of the limitations of hospital residence he can still, through occupational therapy, be a useful member of society, cannot be overestimated. This is now a well established principle in occupational therapy for the mentally and nervously ill.

The recognized principles through which this treatment measure works are still few in number, but in 1915 with the exception of a few people who were working with the mental and nervous, all occupational therapists believed the sole object of this treatment measure to be diversional. One department that at this early date was already developing a technique that tended away from the diversional school indicated the recognition of the new principle in this statement: "The therapeutic value to the patient often lies largely in making the craft project as interesting and beautiful, but essentially useful and serviceable, as is possible within the limitations of the hospital and treatment classification." While in no way depreciating the value of diversional occupational treatment, where clearly indicated, the recognition of the new principle initiated the thoughtful study and adaptation of various projects to occupational therapy treatment, the use of which we now find of great value.

This development in the past ten years in one department has followed this sequence: Repair and upkeep of certain hospital and occupational equipment, making new equipment in the case of occupational apparatus especially designed to meet the needs of our own department;[1] designing and making new equipment (even designing new techniques) to make possible the more efficient occupational therapy treatment of certain groups of patients in our own hospital and especially handicapped groups in other hospitals.[2] Parallel with the above has developed the wholesome practice of having the patient in certain shops make special accessories[3] that effect economy and produce better quality in the product of the treatment of the very sick patient.[4]

Recently along with the above has developed the interest in the occupational therapy upkeep problems; repairing and replacing certain tools that give way under the unusual wear, but more largely the study of the reasons



Plaques 1, 2 and 3, used to teach the blind instructor the introductory steps in knot work or netting.

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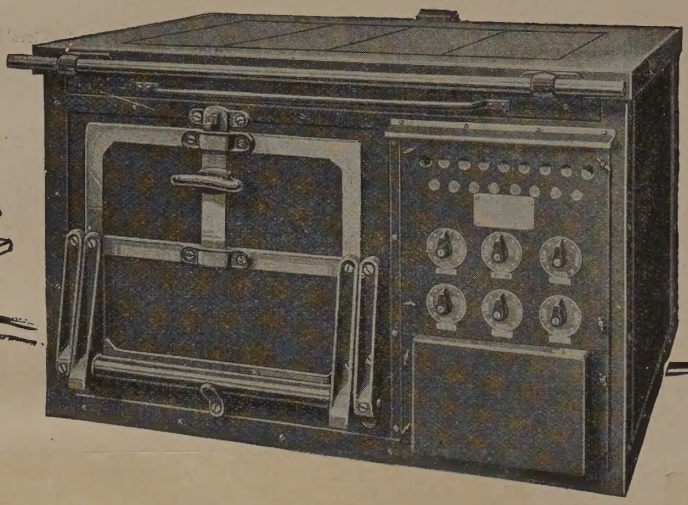

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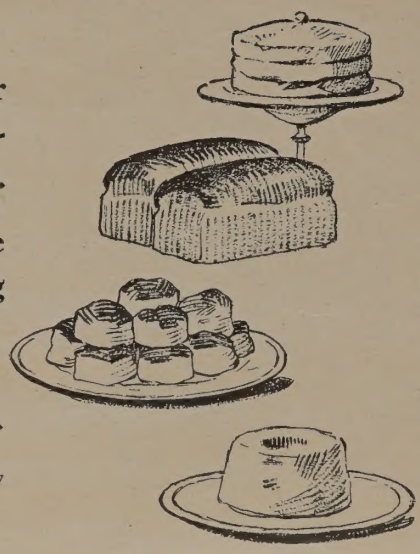

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for the breakdown and the designing and constructing of special tools that meet and overcome the destructiveness of confused and inexperienced patients. It seems needless to say that the patient who is privileged to engage in this form of occupational treatment receives through the more normal satisfaction, reactions that are highly therapeutic. Much of this experience and development has been published, as indicated, and more recently the entire experience of this department has been presented in book form.[5]

It would seem that eventually the material for carrying on such phases of occupational treatment would become exhausted, but in reality this field is unlimited and its consistent development indicates and makes possible further development.

Attention must also be called to the fact that not only is the patient, who may engage in this form of occupational treatment, and the one directly affected by his labors, helped, but the atmosphere created thus permeates the entire department and benefits all. Thus, recently many of the patients in the basketry shop have had a special interest in making a number of model baskets for the New York State Commission for the Blind and more recently the carpenter shop group has become interested in redesigning and simplifying the laundry bag loom,[6] so that it would be suitable for the use of certain blind students. When it was found that this had served the initial worker, but would not reach a special problem case, because the local blind instructor was not familiar with knot work or netting, the problem of developing the means of teaching the instructor through a series of special demonstration plaques was undertaken. As the solution of this problem seems to contain data of interest to others than the local group, it will be presented in detail.

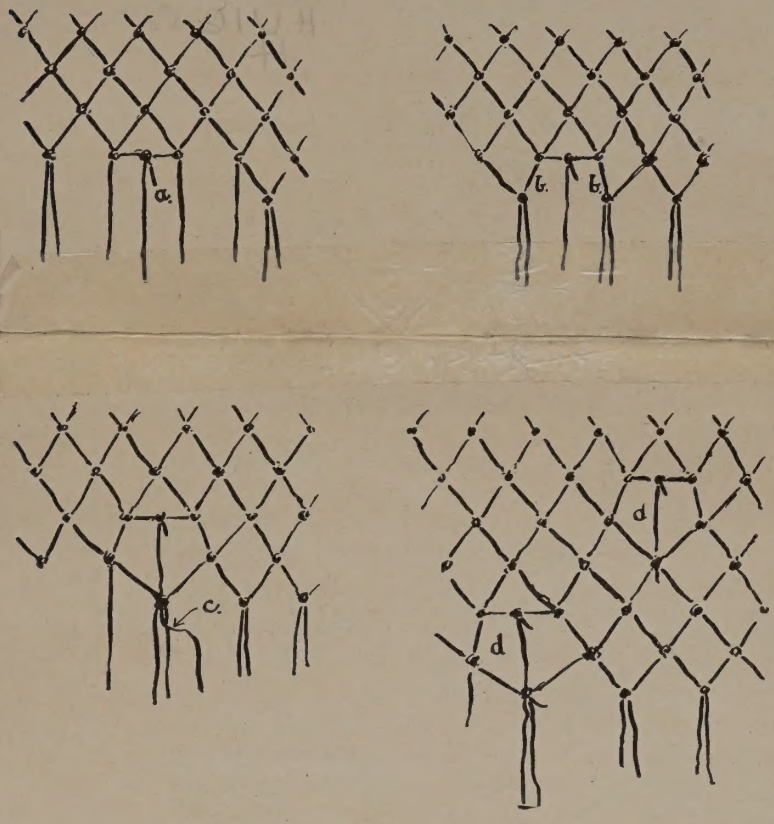
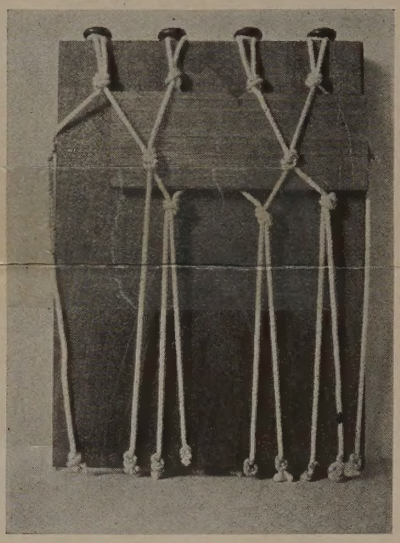
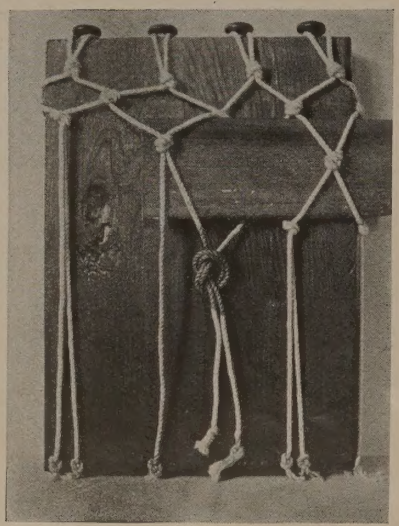


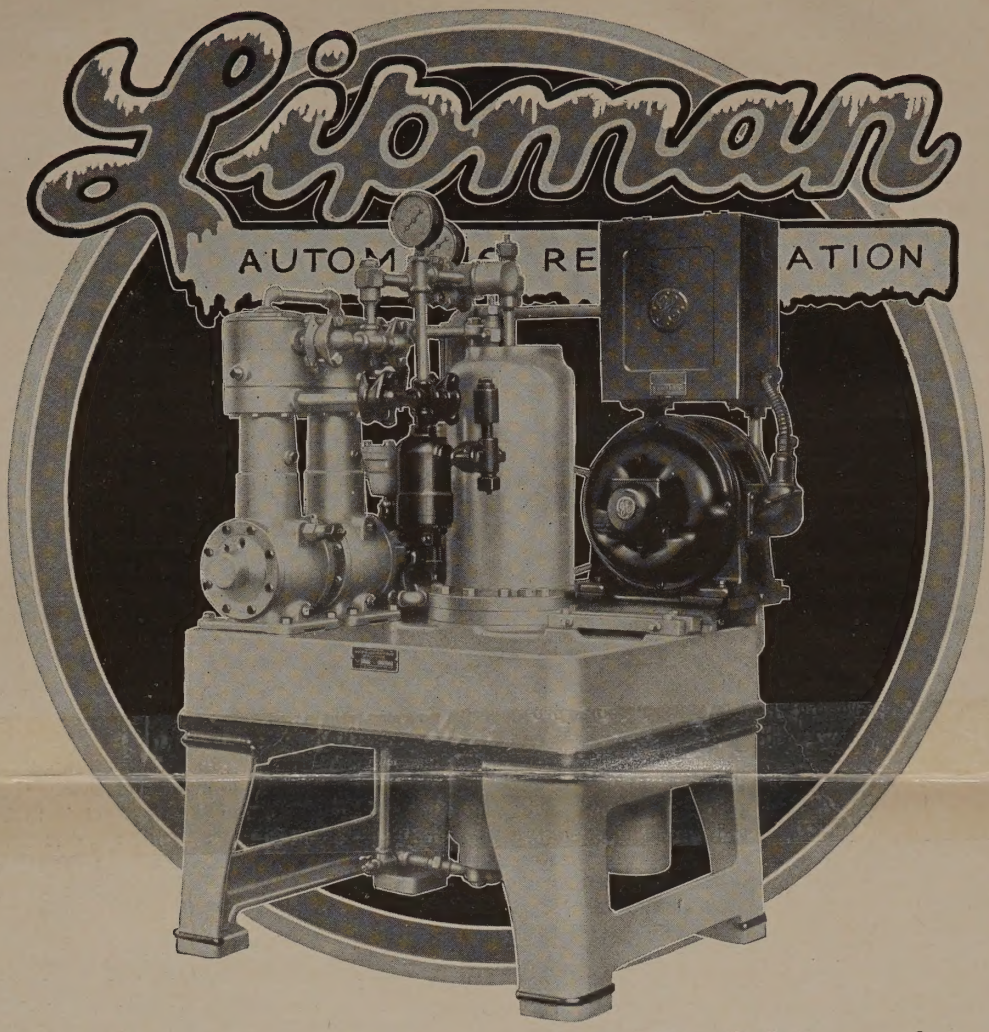
Fig. 1 (below) showing modified loom with upholstered nails driven into edge of the board, and Fig. 2 (above) showing the method of knot tying after preliminary steps.



Plaque 4, used to show the continuation of the introductory steps upon insertion of board.



Plaque 5, used to show the steps after the knot work has become well started through the use of the board.



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The modified loom is a board 1 by 6 by 27 inches with upholstered nails driven into the edge of the board (Fig. 1). The further construction of this loom and its use will be explained by the illustrations of the series of demonstration plaques and the instructions that were attached to the back of each plaque. The loom and plaques were made as occupational therapy treatment and the instructions were typed and attached to the plaques. The same data were also set in Braille.

Following are the data accompanying the plaques:

1. This knot is used in constructing bags upon the bag frame.

The bag frame is a board 1 by 6 by 27 inches with nails placed about 1 inch apart in the 1 inch face. Nails extend ¼ inch and should have large flat heads. The number of nails and spacing control the number of mesh to a row while the mesh stick controls the size of mesh. The mesh stick for the laundry bag measures ⅛ inch by ⅞ inch by 6 inches. The frame may be hung from four cords for convenience in working. If a piece of stiff paper is thumb tacked to the edge of the frame under the cord, it will separate the sides of the bag and avoid confusion.

2. To warp, cut sixty-eight, 9 feet lengths of number 15 cord. The lengths should be 36 inches longer than twice the length of the bag it is desired to make. Take a length, bring ends together and slide through fingers till middle is reached; take resulting loop and tie knot at a point ¾ inch in from loop. Hang this length on warp nail by the loop. Prepare and hang another loop, proceeding until bag frame is warped.

3. Take a pair of cords from adjacent looped lengths and tie (using the knot) placing the knot at the proper distance below the row of knots formed in stage number 1. Take up the next pair of adjacent cords and knot, taking care to bring to the level just established. Proceed until this row is complete. Note that the pairing of adjacent threads by the new knot separates the threads paired by adjacent knots in the row above.

4. The mesh stick is used to control the size of mesh when the third row of knots is formed. The mesh stick separates the adjacent pairs and the new knots are tied up tight to the stick on its under edge. As meshes are completed the mesh stick is slipped forward.

5. The construction of the bag continues as just described, row after row of meshes being tied over the mesh stick as indicated in stage number 3. When the bag is of sufficient depth it is taken from the bag frame, the bottom edges brought together and the threads from the opposite sides paired and tied, thus closing the bottom. A heavy draw cord is placed through the loops of the upper edge of the bag and it is complete.

Knot Stiffened With Shellac

The demonstrations are all made of the same cord used in making the laundry bag, with the exception of the knot which is made of a much heavier cord. The knot was made and held into its open formation by pins, filled with shellac which stiffened the rope so that the pins could be removed. The ends of all cords are knotted to keep from fraying. In the demonstrations, the ends of the cords were fastened by small nails driven through the knotted ends. The loom and demonstration plaques are accompanied by a sample bag. Experience has proved this method satisfactory to all concerned.

By making certain changes in the set up of the bag frame, circular nets for other purposes can be constructed upon it. Using a number 24 cord and setting up a looped pair of threads to every other nail and using a mesh stick ⅛ by 2¾ by 10 inch, nets for the basket ball goals can be made. This involves no radical change in the knoting construction.

Dip nets could be made as large as the bag frame, or a smaller frame can be constructed with a relatively smaller number of nails. Cord number 15 would be used (in some instances lighter weight could be used) and set up as instructed for the laundry bag, estimating the length of cord as indicated. When a sufficient quantity of the net has been constructed, to begin to decrease the circumference, the worker takes a pair of adjacent threads and without the aid of the mesh stick ties a knot so high that the result is not a diamond mesh but an equilateral triangle with knots at the three corners and a knot at the center of the basket. See Fig. 2 (a).

One of the pair of threads below the central base knot is cut. In tying knots of adjacent diamonds the sides next to the triangle are shortened as shown in the figure. He then continues with the regular mesh until another thread is dropped by the same process. The number of threads to be dropped is decided by the amount of taper desired. The thread is dropped in the next row at these fixed points in the following manner: The worker takes adjacent threads on each side of the triangle and, taking with these the single thread suspended from the center of the triangle's base, ties a three cord knot and clips the thread that came from the triangle, ¼ inch below the knot just made, as shown at (c) in Fig. 2. He proceeds with regular diamond meshes until the next triangle mesh is reached, at which point the thread is dropped in the manner just described. See Fig. 2 (d.d.).

Unless it is desired to taper the net rapidly, a row or more of regular mesh is made before the next set of threads is dropped. When the next set is to be dropped care should be taken to place the diamond meshes between those in the above row. The net may be narrowed thus until, by tying a few threads, the bottom will close in a round point.

REFERENCES

[1] Efficiency Equipment, Industrial Arts Magazine, August, 1918.
[2] Equipment for the Bedside Occupation of Men, Industrial Arts Magazine, Oct.-Nov., 1918, and Hospital Progress, Aug-Sept., 1920.
[3] Circular Bag Weaving, Archives of Occupational Therapy, Dec. 1923 and Weaving Frame for Bedside Occupational Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation, April 1925.
[4] The Producing in the Carpenter Shop and Metal Shops, Baskets and Tray Bottoms, Lamp Skeletons, etc.
[5] Occupational Therapy for the Mentally and Nervously Ill, by Louis J. Haas, Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee.
[6] See Equipment for Bedside Occupation of Men, Industrial Arts Magazine, Oct.-Nov. 1918, or chapter No. 6, pages 79 to 83, Occupational Therapy for the Mentally and Nervously Ill.

GRADUATING EXERCISES HELD

Twenty-one students graduated from the Boston School of Occupational Therapy Friday evening, December 4. Dr. John D. Adams, chairman of the board of directors of the school presided at the exercises and three prominent speakers took part.

Dr. Goldwin W. Howland, University of Toronto, spoke of the progress of occupational therapy throughout Canada. Mrs. Eleanor Clarke Slagle, secretary-treasurer of the American Occupational Therapy Association, told of the growth of this work throughout the hospitals in this country.

Rev. Henry K. Sherrill, rector of Trinity Church, Boston, and a member of the board of directors of the school, gave a brief talk, dwelling on the spirit of service. The dean of the school, Marjorie B. Green, awarded the diplomas.

Approximately two hundred guests were present and at the close of the exercises refreshments were served.

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